

a community called ...

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THE GREAT ADVOCATE.

SOME years ago a certain town was thrown into great confusion by a daring robbery. The thieves were pursued and taken, and the whole gang was broken up. All were committed to prison, to await their trial. As the time approached, great was the anxiety of those who were interested in the fate of the prisoners.

The father of one was a respectable tradesman. His own credit was at stake. He spared no expense in procuring the best counsel he could hear of for his unhappy son. True, it

was a desperate case. Few would come forward to speak in the young man's behalf. But still the father's hopes were strong, because he had secured an advocate who was known to be very skillful, and who had been so successful in other cases that much was to be hoped for from him.

Another parent was a poor widow. She was greatly cast down; her son was likely to be transported for life. And who was to plead for him? She could not afford to pay a counselor. Yet her necessity only made her the more earnest; and she was to be seen early and late, begging the contributions of any who might pity *her* case, if not her son's, that she might get some one to plead for him who so greatly needed an advocate.

There was one among the criminals, a ring-leader—a bold, stout-hearted fellow—who boasted that he wanted no help, and that he meant to plead for himself. Offers of help were made, but they were proudly refused. This man intended to be his own advocate.

The character of a fourth was entirely lost

He had lived in a course of crime, and his guilt was so clear there was no hope for him. No one would stand his friend. This man had no advocate.

Now, let us turn from thinking of the condition of these unhappy men, before the earthly bar to which they would shortly be called, to meditate on the state of sinners called to stand before the judgment-seat of Christ.

In the case of the prisoners, their deliverance was thought to depend very much upon the advocate employed in their behalf.

And how strikingly is this the case with sinners against God! To them an Advocate is recommended who is willing to undertake the worst possible case committed to his care, who will go through his undertaking to the end, and in whose hands no cause ever yet failed.

Whether you wish to hear any more about this Advocate will depend upon whether you feel your want of him or not. The prisoners would not have cared about an advocate if they had not known themselves to be in dan-

ger. So neither will you unless you feel and know yourself to be overtaken by divine justice—a criminal having no excuse to offer, awaiting the day of trial, and uncertain what the end may be.

Is this your case? Or do you flatter yourself that you are not so bad as all this—that, far from deserving to be put on a level with the thief about to be tried for his life, you have done nothing to merit wrath and condemnation—have been better than many—or, at all events, though you may be a sinner, as all are, you put your trust in God's mercy? Hear God's own words on this subject: "The soul that sinneth, it shall die." Ezek. xviii, 4. "The wrath of God is revealed from heaven against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men." Rom. i, 18. If you will only believe God's word, you will see that you want an Advocate to plead for you, and that you must be lost without one.

But if you have been brought to see your guilt, your danger, your hopeless, helpless condition, then how gladly will you welcome the

news of an Advocate—one who will feel for you, and to whom you may safely trust your cause!

Who is this Advocate? Where is such a one to be found? He is no other than the Son of God; Jesus Christ, the almighty, all-sufficient Saviour. To recommend him to you, consider a few of his qualifications. He has shown himself ready to take up the worst possible case. You will remember that among the prisoners just mentioned was one whose character was so lost that no one could be found to plead for him. But it is not so with your great Advocate. Jesus pleads the most desperate case, if only it be humbly and wholly trusted to him.

Again, when a counsel pleads for a prisoner, he tries to make the best of his case. He offers all the excuses he can think of. He tries to excite the pity of his judges; and sometimes succeeds so well as to melt the hearts of the very enemies of the prisoners, even against their better judgment.

But our great Advocate proceeds in a very

different way. He offers no excuses for the sinner, for that would be to lessen the strict justice and holiness of his own law. He pleads—but not the sinner's innocence, or his former good conduct, or his present penitence and tears. No! He pleads his own work in the sinner's behalf. He came down from heaven, and became man, that, *as man*, he might fulfill the law which man had broken. This was the work which he undertook, and which he actually accomplished; and now, having ascended into heaven, his work is still carried on. "He ever liveth to make intercession."

Do you ask, How shall I obtain the help of this Advocate? The answer is, *Believe*. Take him at his word: "Him that cometh to me, I will in no wise cast out." John vi, 37. Go, then, to him, just as you are. Make no excuses. Do not try to make out a good case, but tell him all; and throw yourself at once upon his work, his righteousness, as your plea, and upon his willingness to plead them in your behalf.

But sometimes it happens that the counsel employed against the prisoner is much more powerful than the one who is engaged for him. Now, in the sinner's case, it is indeed true that there is every thing to be said against him, and all can be fully proved. His accuser is powerful, crafty, and unceasing in his efforts. He never loses an advantage. He has plenty of witnesses to bring against the sinner—plenty of crimes to lay to his charge. But the great Advocate is able to answer every accusation. Turn to Zech. iii, 1-5. It is a wonderful passage, and will serve to illustrate the advocacy of Christ. In a vision, Joshua, the high-priest, was seen standing at the right hand of God. And there stood Satan also—to resist him, to plead against him, just as a counsel would plead against a prisoner. Doubtless, Joshua's very appearance was against him. He was "clothed in filthy garments," a fit representation of the defilement with which sin covers us before God. There was no denying it; it was a plain case. What hope was there, then, for Joshua? Why, there

was One also standing there who said, "Take away the filthy garments from him. And unto him he said, Behold, I have caused thine iniquity to pass from thee, and I will clothe thee with change of raiment." And thus Satan was rebuked, and driven away, and all his arguments fell to the ground.

And so it is with all the redeemed of the Lord. Every accusation is answered; in Christ the broken law is fulfilled, justice is satisfied; they have that righteousness which is "upon all them that believe," and they are thus completely accepted and restored to favor.

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